

Scoping Report

Environmental Assessment for the Proposed South Pit Pumice Mine Expansion

Prepared By:

**Mike Dechter
Jemez Ranger District NEPA Coordinator**

January 2006

INTRODUCTION

This proposed pumice mine is being evaluated according to Forest Service National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures and policy due to an application for pumice mining by Copar Pumice Company (Copar). An application in the form of a plan of operations for a 100-acre mine site adjacent to the existing 9-acre South Pit Mine was received by the Forest Service on December 28, 2004. The proposed pumice mine is located on the Jemez Ranger District of the Santa Fe National Forest, adjacent to Forest Road 270C north of the Community of Ponderosa on the western slope of Cerro del Pino (T18N R3E Sec 25).

Pumice mining in the Jemez begins by cutting trees and vegetation, clearing topsoil, and stockpiling resources (trees and topsoil) required for reclamation. After the pumice layer is exposed, mining is generally done with bulldozers and front-end loaders. Sometimes extra screening and loading machinery is used, which requires the use of a generator or power lines.

Mine reclamation occurs during the extraction process so that only a portion of the mine is being disturbed at any given time period. Reclamation includes reshaping the mine area to mimic and blend into the surrounding topography to the extent possible while retaining the internal drainage. Revegetation may require three or more years due to drought or other conditions. No permanent structures will be constructed as part of the mine.

The US Forest Service will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act to evaluate the potential impacts associated with construction, implementation, and revegetation of the proposed Utility Block Pumice Mine.

SCOPING PROCESS

The scoping process for the South Pit Pumice Mine Expansion was conducted together with scoping for a separate proposed pumice mine (Cerro del Pino Pumice Mine) between September 20th and November 21st. This report will discuss those scoping activities and comments received specifically for the proposed South Pit Expansion, though many of these activities and comments actually apply to both proposed pumice mine projects. Scoping for the Cerro del Pino Pumice Mine will be discussed in a separate environmental analysis and/or scoping report.

To begin the NEPA process and the Jemez Ranger District made available information about the proposed South Pit Pumice Mine Expansion and solicited input from the public to help identify the scope of the environmental analysis as well as specific concerns and issues that should be addressed in the analysis. As part of the scoping process, the Forest Service sent out over 100 scoping letters, posted notices near local communities, held two public meetings, met with the local Jemez Pueblo, met with Copar, met with Utility Block, and printed an article in the local newspaper (the Jemez Thunder). These efforts were meant to provide members of the public, the Jemez Pueblo, and local pumice mining companies with information about the proposed project and the NEPA process. Additionally each of these scoping activities solicited information from those interested in the project and provided resources to contact Forest Service Personnel.

The following table describes the specific scoping activities that occurred for this project:

Date	Scoping Medium	Participants	Association	Contact Info
Fall, 2005	Meeting, Jemez Ranger District	Richard Cook, Kelly Armstrong,	Copar Pumice Company	
September 12, 2005	Meeting, Jemez Ranger District	Ric Bell, Tim Leftwich	Copar, GL Environmental	
October 1 to Dec 31, 2005	Schedule of Proposed Actions (website)	n/a	n/a	
October 3, 2005	Scoping letter (mail) – scoping letter signed 9/29/05	Community of Ponderosa (leter went out with the water bil)	Community of Ponderosa	n/a
October 6, 2005	Scoping letter (mail) – scoping letter signed 10/6/05	Center for Biological Diversity Jemez Pueblo Forest Guardians Roger Peterson Betsy Reed Sam Hitt Santa Domingo Pueblo Steve Anderson Jan Ward Thomas Jervis	- - - - Sierra Club NM Env. Dept Wild Watersheds - NM Game&Fish Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society	
October 15, 2005	Newspaper article	Jemez Thunder distribution	n/a	
October 17, 2005	Meeting	Michael Toledo	Jemez Pueblo	
October 18, 2005	E-mail	Sam G. Beard Phil Stauffer Justine Broadhurst David Torney	- LANL - -	samgbeard@msn.com stauffer@lanl.gov justineboradhurst@yahoo.com davidtorney@earthlink.net
October 19, 2005	Public Meeting at Ponderosa Community Center	29 local citizens	Ponderosa residents	
October 22, 2005	Public Meeting at Wallatowa Visitors Center	Bob Davis Ernie Lucero Steve Blodgett Willie Trujillo Kathleen Wiegand	Jemez Springs Ponderosa Ponderosa Ponderosa Jemez Springs	- 505-823-0945 505-834-0478, sblodgettjemezpuable-drp.org 505-834-7234 505-829-3109
November 3, 2005	Scoping letter (mail) – scoping letter signed	Karen Garcia	NM Energy, Minerals, and Natural	

	10/6/05		Resources Dep.	
--	---------	--	-------------------	--

SUMMARY OF SCOPING COMMENTS

The following table includes information from the comments received during project scoping. Often, scoping responses did not specify whether the comments within were meant for the proposed Cerro del Pino Pumice Mine or the proposed South Pit Pumice Mine Expansion. If the scoping responses did not specify which project they were addressing, they were interpreted as addressing both proposed projects.

Name	Scoping media	Date	Issues/Concerns/Comments
Lorraine Johnson	Letter	10/19/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hauling traffic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety in Ponderosa Noise in Ponderosa
Don Lauser	Comment Form	10/19/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hauling traffic in Ponderosa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear on roads Noise pollution Traffic mishaps
Ramon Trujillo	Comment Form	10/19/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hauling traffic in Ponderosa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hours of hauling Speed limits (safety) Safety of school children
Henry Street	Comment Form	10/19/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hauling traffic in Ponderosa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforcement of speed limit
Mary Caldwell	Comment Form	10/19/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributes to local economy; jobs Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehabilitation of old mines has been successful Hauling traffic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There has never been any incidents
Dave Golden	Comment Form	10/19/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hauling traffic in Ponderosa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noise
Diana Clark	Comment Form	10/19/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hauling traffic in Ponderosa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to ensure safety of residents (speed enforcement – 40 mph) Cumulative problems with traffic from other projects (Ponderosa Water Line and Paliza Campground)
Steve Finch	Phone call	10/19/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned about visibility from the Jemez Valley of the proposed mine

Name	Scoping media	Date	Issues/Concerns/Comments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned that Copar won't be compliant with FS specifications Worried that mining will impact ground water
Larry Panana	Comment Form	10/20/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned that Copar pumice trucks drive too fast and use Jake brake through the Jemez Pueblo
Steve Blodgett	Letter	10/22 and 10/24/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is room for only one pumice mine to haul along FR10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copar's proposed mine should not be granted because of past violations by Copar in New Mexico Impacts to health and safety should be considered in analysis Proposed mine is obviously a significant impact and requires an EIS Pumice haul traffic on narrow, mountain roads (FR10) is dangerous The site is not suitable for mining
David Torney	Comment Form	10/27/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Felt mine should not be more than 30 acres Wants number of trucks for hauling specified Doesn't think downed trees should be sold, but should be chipped and mulched
Rebecca G. Perry Piper	Comment Form	10/28/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned that project will be 'categorically excluded' from NEPA process Concerned about cumulative effects of mines
Ray Rivera	Letter	10/28/07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned that mining above his property has impacts to the ground water and he has observed the effects of mining in this area to the water in his stream Pumice trucks cause dust problems in the dry season Says there is runoff from the mine into his property Access to the mine leads to increased recreation traffic

Name	Scoping media	Date	Issues/Concerns/Comments
			and poaching
Jim Clark	Comment Form	11/4/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hauling traffic in Ponderosa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speed enforcement
Sophie Archibeque	Comment Form	11/4/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hauling traffic in Ponderosa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear and tear on roads Cumulative traffic from Poderosa Water Line Safety of school children Speed enforcement
Suzy Marlow	Phone Call	10/21/2005	Wanted more information
Kathy Trujillo	Comment Form	10/22/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hauling traffic in Ponderosa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety of school childred Hauling hours Safety of pets Speed enforcement Environmental Impact Length of time
Willie Trujillo	Comment Form	10/22/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hauling traffic in Ponderosa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear and tear of State road 290 Speed enforcement Cumulative impact with Ponderosa Water Line Should analyze northerly route through community of Sierra de los Pinos
Tom Little	Phone Call	10/25/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hauling traffic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was unfair for trucks to go through Sierra de los Pinos because of complaints in Ponderosa
Anne Cook (Sierra de los Pinos Homeowners Association)	Phone Call	10/25/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hauling traffic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was unfair for trucks to go through Sierra de los Pinos because of complaints in Ponderosa
Arleen Gonzales David Golden Kathy Trujillo Melissa Long Dan McCullough Steve Blodgett Mr. & Mrs. Frank Gonzales Richard Salazar Pauline Sharkey Richard R. Romey	Typed Submittal	11/4/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for the mine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utility Block has a good safety record Ponderosa benefits from their operation Good compliance by Utility Block
Lisa Kirkpatrick,	Letter	11/7/2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned about Copar's

Name	Scoping media	Date	Issues/Concerns/Comments
New Mexico Game and Fish			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> compliance with regulations Identifies that the haul route will go through sensitive species habitat on FR 10 – traffic limitations should be considered Cumulative effects need to address the Mexican spotted owl and northern goshawk Suggested Jemez Mountain Salamander surveys because the proposal seems to be in its habitat They suggest woody debris, planting of seedlings, and fertilizer for reclamation The Forest Service should require detailed design specifications for erosion control and runoff because of past problems at Copar mines
Stephen Lucero (New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department; Mining and Minerals Division)	Letter	11/9/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legality of mining for pumice for aggregate construction uses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must determine Mining Act jurisdiction Use of pumice extracted from the mine
David Toledo (Pueblo of Jemez)	Letter	10/31/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hauling traffic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic congestion Safety Cumulative impacts of more than one pumice mine using State Hwy 4
Gedi Cibas (New Mexico Environmental Department)	Letter	11/21/2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erosion from mine Water resource impacts No expected impacts to ground water Dust control should be used by using chemical stabilizer on roads Reclamation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seed mix: is it native (concern over invasives)? Include shrubs and herbaceous elements? Topsoil depth

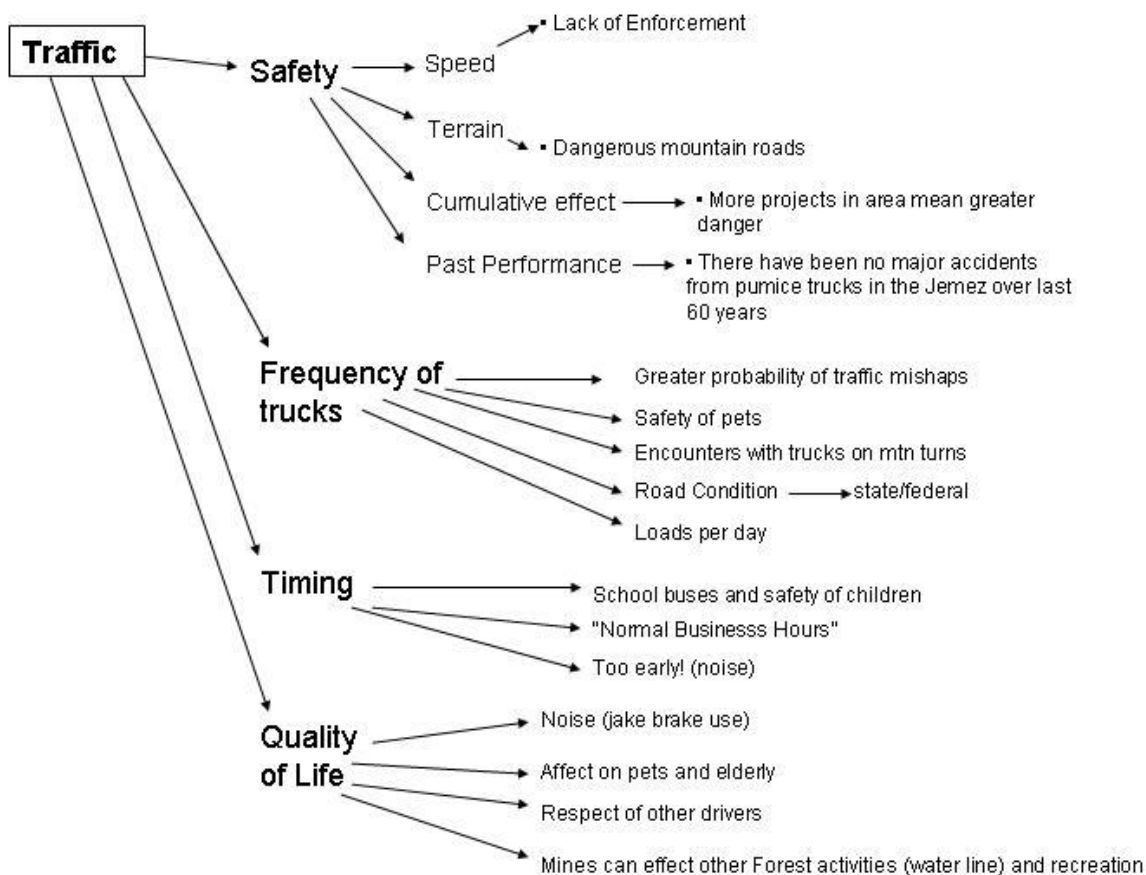
Name	Scoping media	Date	Issues/Concerns/Comments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hauling traffic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hazardous plan onsite in case of hauling accidents • Permits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Construction permit required for generator use

COMMENT ANALYSIS

Comments submitted during focus identified the following main issues:

Main Issue	Sub-issue
Traffic	Safety
	Frequency of Trucks
	Timing
	Quality of Life
	Fairness
	Impact on other projects
Environmental Impacts	Water Quality
	Erosion
	Reclamation – Invasive Species
	Air Quality/Dust
	Ground water
Economics	Jobs
	Supports local community
Legality	Mining Act jurisdiction
	Good compliance

The volume and diversity of comments regarding the traffic impacts of this proposed project in concert with other nearby concurrently proposed projects clearly points to traffic as the primary issue of concern. This is true not only of nearby communities, but also of the Jemez Pueblo and other governmental organizations. The following figure illustrates the scope of those traffic concerns:



Environmental comments were less numerous and less focused as well. Most comments about environmental impacts mentioned concern about effects to nearby water resources, but also included concern over dust, invasive species, and erosion from the mine. One comment by the New Mexico Environmental Department indicated that ground water was not likely to be impacted, yet a nearby landowner stated that the existing South Pit mine impacts his water quality and thus the expansion likely will as well. The New Mexico Game and Fish discussed potential impacts to sensitive wildlife species such as the Jemez Mountain Salamander and the northern goshawk and stated that it was important to consider cumulative effects when analyzing impacts.

Other comments either supported the mine because of the jobs and other economic benefits it would bring to local nearby communities. Yet, there were several comments that showed concerns over the potential quality of life impacts from pumice hauling traffic and noise through local communities and on forest roads. One letter asked for more information to determine the legality of the mine in compliance with the 1872 Mining Act.